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## **Review of 2005 Weather Extremes and Disasters**

MADISON – State and local emergency officials responded to a variety of emergencies in Wisconsin, ranging from wildfires to a record number of tornadoes, and providing shelter to evacuees from hurricane-ravaged states.

The worst tornado outbreak ever in Wisconsin's recorded history took place on August 18 with 27 tornadoes hitting the state. The hardest hit areas were an F3 near Stoughton in Dane County and an F2 at Viola. Governor Doyle requested federal disaster assistance but that request was denied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

On May 5, 2005, Governor Doyle declared a State of Emergency for Adams County following a wildfire that burned several homes and out buildings. The fire started near Big Flats, burning nearly 4,000 acres. It was one of the worst wildfires in Wisconsin in many years.

Nearly 2,000 families made their way to Wisconsin following the outbreak of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that struck the gulf coast region. On September 8, two charter flights from Louisiana arrived in Milwaukee with 170 people and 26 pets. A temporary shelter was set up at the Tommy Thompson Youth Center at State Fair Park for hurricane evacuees. The shelter closed November 1, as remaining evacuees were moved into long-term housing.

As a result of the hurricanes, Governor Doyle ordered Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) to review the state's emergency response plans to ensure they include provisions for mass evacuations and responding to special-needs populations. WEM is in the process of working with county emergency management directors to review and update the state and local plans.

Attached is a list of the 2005 weather extremes by the National Weather Service.

(MORE)

## **Top Weather Events of 2005**

### **National Weather Service (In order of time occurrence)**

#### **January 1-2 Ice storm and snow storm combination over northwest Wisconsin.**

On January 1-2, an ice storm affected the northwestern counties of Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, and Iron. Ice accumulations of ¼ to ½ inch were reported. Later, up to 6 inches of snow and sleet fell on top of the ice after colder air pushed in.

#### **January 5-6 Snowstorm across southern Wisconsin.**

Widespread moderate to heavy snow developed overnight Jan. 5 (morning of Jan. 6) and lasted through Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> over the Mid-Mississippi River Valley. Total storm accumulations ranged from 8 to 14 inches, with the heaviest totals along the Illinois border.

#### **January 21-22 Snowstorm and near blizzard conditions.**

A vigorous low pressure system produced heavy snow across most of the state during the evening of Jan. 21. Hourly snow rates reached 2 to 3 inches in places. Winds of 20 to 30 mph with gusts to 40 mph were noted for a couple hours, causing near blizzard conditions on the morning of Jan. 22.

Northeast winds on the backside of the storm produced lake effect snow along the shoreline counties. Total storm accumulations ranged from 4 to 8 inches across northwestern Wisconsin to 8 to locally 16 inches across the southeast third, with the highest amounts across Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine, and Kenosha Counties. Some of the higher totals include 16.0 inches 2 miles northwest of Milwaukee (Milwaukee County), 15.0 inches in both Brown Deer (Milwaukee County) and 5 miles northwest of Kenosha (Kenosha County), and 14.5 inches in Brookfield (Waukesha County).

#### **Additional Winter storms over northwestern Wisconsin on January 12, February 27 and Feb 28.**

Northwestern Wisconsin experienced additional winter storms on several days in January and February. Each of these storms deposited more than 8 inches in some locations.

#### **March 18-19 Winter storm.**

On March 18-19 a prolonged period of late season, heavy snow moved across central Wisconsin. Storm total accumulations of 8 to 16 inches covered a broad area, with a band of 18 to 23 inch snowfall fell in an area from Alma (Buffalo County) to Northfield (Jackson County). Strong easterly winds of 20 to 30 mph accompanied the heavy snow, producing drifts as much as 4 to 5 feet deep in some locations. Some of the higher snowfall totals included 23 inches at Alma Center (Jackson County), 21.5 inches at Buffalo City (Buffalo County), 18.5 inches at Ettrick (Trempealeau County), 11.5 inches at Port Edwards (Wood County), 10.0 inches at King (Waupaca County), and 9.5 inches near Wautoma (Waushara County).

#### **May 5 Wildfire in Adams County.**

A spring drought manifested itself in the form of a wildfire in near Big Flats in Adams County on May 5. Homes and other buildings were destroyed as about 4,000 acres of forest and grassland burned. Unseasonably warm temperatures in the lower to mid 70s along with gusty south to southwest winds helped the fire's progression.

#### **July 23 Severe Thunderstorms.**

Severe Thunderstorms developed in Minnesota during the morning and tracked into central by mid afternoon. Thunderstorm winds gusted mainly between 60 and 70 mph with this line of thunderstorms, with several reports of 70 to 80 mph. Widespread tree and power line damage was reported from west central Wisconsin through central Wisconsin, to south-central and southeast Wisconsin. A barn was completely destroyed at a location 3 miles southwest of Waupun in Dodge County as these storms passed through.

#### **August 18 Record-breaking major tornado outbreak.**

The worst tornado outbreak ever in Wisconsin recorded history took place on August 18, 2005. A record outbreak of 27 tornadoes formed across Wisconsin in the late afternoon and evening. The previous record of 24 tornadoes was set on May 8, 1988. There were 16 confirmed tornadoes in the NWS

Milwaukee/Sullivan County Warning Area (CWA), 5 confirmed tornadoes in the NWS Green Bay CWA and 6 confirmed tornadoes in the NWS La Crosse CWA. Two communities were impacted the hardest. The village of Viola sustained F2 damage and near the city of Stoughton sustained F3 damage. Only one directly-related fatality was reported along with 27 injuries during the outbreak.

#### **October 4<sup>th</sup> Floods in northwest Wisconsin.**

During the early morning hours of October 4<sup>th</sup> heavy rains drenched far northwestern Wisconsin. The hardest hit areas were Bayfield and Burnett counties. Washburn, Sawyer, Ashland, and Price Counties had several roads that were closed from high water. The total damage to roads and water treatment plants was estimated at \$345,000. A few areas reported rainfall totals at or above 3 inches.

In Burnett County, Wood River and Memory Lake overflowed their banks as up to 8 inches of rain fell overnight and in the morning. A few homes were evacuated near the Wood River. The damage to roadways due to erosion was estimated at \$50,000.

#### **Drought.**

After a dry spring, a dry and warm summer and fall worsened drought conditions for winter across the southeastern half of the state. Much of southern Wisconsin was placed under a severe drought (D2) to an extreme drought (D3) by July and northern Wisconsin was placed under a severe drought in August. Yearly rainfall deficits averaged 5 to 10 inches across the state. Conditions began to ease slightly toward the end of October through December after some much needed rain moved across the state.

## **Other Miscellaneous Information**

#### **2004-2005 winter snowfall.**

Total seasonal snowfall across the state was generally near average with the exception of southern Wisconsin where totals were below average. The maximum total of 153.1 inches (near-normal) occurred in Hurley and the minimum total of 23.0 inches occurred in Mazomanie (well below-normal). Some other totals include 43.9 inches at Madison, 48.2 inches at Milwaukee, 48.9 inches at La Crosse, 55.6 inches at Green Bay, and 111.1 inches at Bayfield. Average snow totals for a winter season range from 30 to 55 inches across the south half to from around 90 to 160 inches across north central Wisconsin.

#### **Tornadoes.**

The total number of tornadoes for 2005 reached an unprecedented 62. This broke the previous record of 43 tornadoes for one year set back in 1980. The average number of tornadoes for one year across the state is only 21.

#### **The maximum and minimum temperatures across the state.**

The coldest temperature recorded in Wisconsin during 2005 was -35 °F at Solon Springs in Douglas County on January 17. The warmest temperature recorded in Wisconsin during 2005 was 101 °F at the Kenosha Waste Water Treatment Plant in Kenosha County on July 24.

#### **Some other extreme temperatures in cities across the state include:**

Milwaukee -	Low temperature of -1 on January 14 and December 7 High temperature of 97 degrees on July 24
Madison -	Low temperature of -10 on January 23 High of 94 degrees on July 17/July 24
Green Bay-	Low temperature of -10 on January 23 High of 93 degrees on July 17/July 24
Wausau -	Low temperature of -17 on January 18 High of 95 degrees on July 17
Rhinelanders-	Low temperature of -22 on January 16

	High of 95 degrees on July 17
La Crosse -	Low temperature of -10 on January 17 High of 99 degrees on July 17
Eau Claire-	Low temperature of -13 on January 17 High of 97 degrees on July 17
Ashland -	Low temperature of -21 on January 17 High of 95 degrees on June 23
Superior	Low temperature of -25 on January 17 High temperature of 95 degrees on June 23

**Total monetary damage.**

The total amount of crop and property damage attributed to weather across all of Wisconsin has been estimated around \$58,940,000 dollars through September 30. This total will rise when affects due to drought can be calculated. Two weather related fatalities and 40 weather related injuries were reported through September 30.